

Washington, DC—Today Representative Peter DeFazio (D-Springfield) fired back at President Bush over the Administration's proposal to use a significant portion of the \$170 million dollars in disaster aid to coastal fishers to pay for the increased cost of the 2010 United States Census. DeFazio and 13 other Members wrote the President warning him against using the salmon disaster aid to fix the mistakes made by his political cronies.

"I am absolutely astounded that the Administration is threatening to break its promise to Oregon by revoking \$70 million in disaster aid to coastal fishers, just to pay for fixing the problems with the Census," DeFazio said. "It is outrageous that the President is trying to fix yet another one of its contract screw-ups with emergency funding for a true disaster along the Oregon coast. The fishing community of Oregon is already suffering because of the flawed Bush policies in the Sacramento River basin. They should not have to suffer again because the President has hired people in Florida who can't count.

We've been there before."

Late Monday night, the Office of Management and Budget, which puts together the President's annual budget, sent Congress a revised budget request for more funding to carry out the 2010 Census. The White House is requesting \$546 million more for the Census, and has proposed using \$70 million of the \$170 million in salmon disaster money allocated in the Farm Bill recently passed by Congress, to pay for the cost over-runs. The Administration entered into a contract with the Harris Corporation, a Florida defense contractor, to conduct the Census, but the contractor has run into serious cost over-runs in the amount of hundreds of millions of dollars.

On May 1, the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) decided to close the salmon fishery in California and most of Oregon. The decision came on the heels of the Pacific Fishery Management Council's recommendation that the fishery be closed.

The closure is due to the unprecedented decline in salmon returning to the Sacramento River, which typically makes a significant contribution to the Oregon fishery. Unfortunately, since these depleted stocks will be co-mingled with other stocks, the season must be almost entirely closed. This means that this will be the worst commercial and recreational fisheries failure in Oregon history.

This is the first ban on salmon fishing since the industry began 150 years ago.

Short-term assistance is critical so that folks can make boat payments, insurance payments, mortgage payments and keep food on the table.

The House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform held a hearing on the Harris Corporation and the problems with the Census on June 11, 2008. <http://oversight.house.gov/story.asp?ID=2001>